

**BEST AVAILABLE COPY****IN THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) A drive assembly for a kart, comprising:  
a drive shaft;  
at least one wheel disposed on the drive shaft;  
an internal combustion engine adapted to be mounted to the kart, the engine comprising an output shaft, and a removable cover, the cover at least in part defining a housing;  
a drive shaft extending through and rotating within the housing of the engine;  
a driving pinion gear disposed on the output shaft of the engine within the housing;  
a driven pinion gear disposed on the drive shaft within the housing, the driven gear being releasably connected to the drive shaft through a connecting element such that the drive shaft may be removed from the engine without removal of the driven gear from the engine; and  
a reduction gearing including at least one reduction gear disposed on an intermediate shaft within the housing, the reduction gearing teethedly intermeshing operatively interconnecting the driving pinion gear to with the driven pinion gear within the housing,  
wherein the shafts of the driving pinion, driven pinion, and reduction gear are the output shaft, the drive shaft and the intermediate shaft being separated by distances within the housing that are fixed and invariable[.]); and  
at least one of the driving gear and the reduction gear being releasably connected to the shaft on which it is disposed such that when the cover is removed from the engine that gear may be removed from the engine without the removal of its shaft.

24. (Cancelled).

25. (Previously Presented) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the drive shaft is a rear wheel drive shaft.

26. (Previously Presented) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the engine is a reciprocating piston engine.

27. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the engine is a rotary piston engine.

28. (Previously Presented) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the housing is a closed structure.

29. (Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the driving pinion gear is connected to the output shaft through a coupling to rotate with the output shaft.

30. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 29, wherein the coupling is a centrifugal clutch.

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim [[31]] 23, wherein the driven pinion is releasably connected to the rear-wheel drive shaft through a connecting element, and  
wherein the connecting element is accessible through a closeable opening in the housing.

33. (Cancelled)

34. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim [[31]] 23, wherein the rear-wheel drive shaft comprises a center section rotatably disposed within the housing and two additional shaft sections removably connected at either end of the center section, and wherein rear wheels are attached to outer ends of the two additional shaft sections.

35. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim [[32]] 23, wherein the driven pinion gear includes a hollow shaft integrally molded therewith,  
wherein the hollow shaft encircles the rear-wheel drive shaft, and  
wherein the connecting element is a releasable key.

36. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim [[23]] 23, further comprising an overload coupling operatively connecting the output shaft with the driving pinion gear.

37. (Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim [[32]] 23, wherein the driven pinion gear includes a hollow shaft integrally molded therewith,  
wherein the hollow shaft encircles the rear-wheel drive shaft, and  
wherein the hollow shaft connects with the rear-wheel drive shaft via a flexible coupling.

38. (Previously Presented) The drive assembly of claim 37, wherein the flexible coupling is a rubber element.

39. (Withdrawn) The drive assembly of claim 37, wherein the flexible coupling is a friction clutch.

40-45. (Cancelled)

46. (Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the reduction gearing comprises:  
first and second stages disposed on a common lay shaft further comprises a second gear disposed on the intermediate shaft.

47. (Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim 46, wherein the first stage comprises at least one gears on the intermediate shaft is replaceable by gears of varying diameters to provide different reduction ratios.

48. (Previously Presented) The drive assembly of claim 47, wherein the housing further comprises a removable cover enclosing the at least one replaceable gear.

49. (Currently Amended) A drive assembly for a kart, comprising:  
 a drive shaft;  
 an internal combustion engine adapted to be mounted to the kart, the engine comprising an output shaft and a removable cover, the cover at least in part defining a housing;  
 a drive shaft extending through and rotating within the housing of the engine;  
 a driving pinion gear disposed on the output shaft of the engine within the housing;  
 a driven pinion gear disposed on the drive shaft within the housing;  
 a reduction gearing including at least one reduction gear disposed on an intermediate shaft within the housing, the reduction gearing operatively connecting the driving pinion gear to the driven pinion gear within the housing;  
 a balance weight mounted on the lay intermediate shaft and rotatable thereon, wherein the balance weight is configured as a first spur gear; and  
 a second spur gear mounted on the output shaft, wherein the diameters of the first and second spur gears are substantially identical, wherein the first spur gear is driven by the second spur gear,  
 wherein the shafts of the driving pinion, driven pinion, and reduction gearing are separated by distances within the housing that are fixed and invariable, and  
 wherein the reduction gearing comprises first and second stages disposed on a common lay shaft.

50. (Currently Amended) The drive assembly of claim 46, further comprising:  
 a starter ring gear disposed on the output shaft; and  
 a starter motor,  
 wherein the starter motor drives driving the starter ring gear through the gearing a gear disposed on the lay intermediate shaft.

51. (Currently Amended) The drive shaft assembly of claim 46, further comprising:  
 a cooling water pump arranged coaxially with, and being driven by, the lay intermediate shaft, wherein the cooling water pump is driven by the lay shaft.

52-54. (Cancelled)

55. (New) The drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the driven gear includes a hollow shaft integrally molded therewith, the hollow shaft encircling the drive shaft.

56. (New) A kart, comprising:  
 a frame having a front portion, a rear portion, and two side portions;  
 the drive assembly of claim 23, wherein the engine is mounted to the frame and the drive shaft is a rear axle, the rear axle being suspensionlessly rotatably connected to the frame; and  
 a pair of wheels disposed on the rear axle;  
 a front axle suspensionlessly rotatably connected to the frame;  
 a pair of wheels disposed on the front axle;  
 a seat disposed on the frame in between the front axle and the rear axle.

57. (New) The kart of claim 55, wherein the engine is disposed near the rear portion and near one of the side portions of the frame.

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58. (New) The kart of claim 55, wherein the drive shaft comprises a center section rotatably disposed within the housing and two additional shaft sections removably connected at either end of the center section, and the rear wheels being disposed on outer ends of the two additional shaft sections.

59. (New) The kart of claim 55, wherein the reduction gearing further comprises a second gear disposed on the intermediate shaft.

60. (New) The kart of claim 55, wherein at least one gears on the intermediate shaft is replaceable by gears of varying diameters to provide different reduction ratios.